THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

June/July 2014 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

The Fog of War

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

During the Bosnian War, I met an American nun in Medjugorje who was furious that she couldn't get the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to assist internally displaced Croatian families which had been resettled in damaged homes. "The UN only wants to help Muslims!" the sister charged, but a closer look revealed that those homes had previously belonged to displaced Muslim families. Everything of value, including the plumbing, had been stripped by Croatian soldiers. The UNHCR refused to refurbish the homes, not because of prejudice, but because it did not want to be complicit in ethnic cleansing.

Getting to the truth in times of war is complicated. Just prior to his invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, Adolf Hitler released photographs of dead bodies in Polish military uniforms. He claimed these "soldiers" had been killed during an attack on Germany. While the corpses were real, the context was a lie concocted as a pretext for invasion. The photos seemed like clumsy propaganda to the Allies, who were not fooled as to who the real aggressors were, but Americans are far less skeptical of our own government's distortions, like the bogus Gulf of Tonkin incident which President Johnson concocted to escalate the Vietnam War.

Nationalism clouds our vision. When the Lusitania sank in 1915, Americans saw it as a heinous attack by a German U-boat against civilians. Germans, on the other hand, insisted that the high casualties were caused by a secondary explosion of armaments being illegally transported by the ocean liner. The competing narratives were used to vilify their opponents. In 2009, an undersea investigating team reported that they had found unexploded depth charges in the Lusitania's wreckage. Professor William Kingston, of Trinity College, Dublin, said, "There's no doubt at all about it that the Royal Navy and British government have taken very considerable steps over the years to try and prevent what can be found out about the Lusitania." Governments don't just spin the truth, they go out of their way to see that their distorted narratives endure.

William Evertson

In August 1995, when I was in the besieged Bosnian capitol, Sarajevo, a friend named Bruno, who wrote for *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, took me to the Markale marketplace where 43 civilians had been killed days earlier by mortars. The West blamed the Serbs, who vigorously denied responsibility. Photos of the casualties helped convince NATO to launch air strikes which tipped the balance in the war against the Serbs. Bruno told me the narrow street was angled in such a way that it was physically impossible for Serbian military positions to reach it with mortars. "Only the Bosnian government itself could have launched the

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Reckoning

by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

On the last Wednesday in April, police in Belfast, Northern Ireland arrested Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and questioned him on the 1972 killing of a Belfast woman falsely accused by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) of collaborating with the British forces. During interviews for an oral history project archived at Boston College, two former IRA volunteers alleged Adams had ordered the death of Jean McConville, a 37-year-old widow and mother of ten.

Helen McKendry, McConville's oldest daughter, thinks she can still identify the IRA men who burst into her family's apartment and grabbed her mother. For two decades she has pursued this case, her other siblings too afraid to do so. (Some have lived for years in close proximity to their mother's suspected killers and said nothing.) McKendry hopes murder charges will be brought against Adams. In the immediate aftermath of his arrest, analysts wondered if the investigation would de-stabilize the peace process. Sinn Fein supporters were asking, "Why now?" Adams arrest had come just days before parliamentary and European Union elections in which Sinn Fein was expected to do well.

Most incensed was Irish journalist Ed Maloney. He oversaw the Boston College oral history project and had conducted many of the interviews, assuring participants their recollections would be embargoed until all the principals had died. He was furious at the Obama administration for sub-poenaing this record of truths remembered, furious too at the college for its acquiescence to the government's demands. The project's purpose was to provide a more thorough

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Fog of War

(Continued from Page 1)

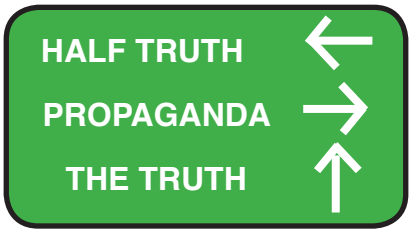
attack," he insisted. Whether Bruno was right or wrong, the possibility that a wartime government would murder its own people to vilify its opponent compounds the difficulty of sorting out the truth. As it happened, international outrage was so great over the marketplace massacre that little attention was paid a week later when Croatian troops ethnically cleansed 200,000 Serbs from Krajina.

Even in situations when the identity of culprits is undisputed, the truth is clouded by a failure to recall historical antecedents. There is righteous anger now towards Christian militiamen in the Central African Republic for ferocious attacks against Muslim civilians, but little recollection that, in 2013, Muslim rebels seized power and brutalized the Christian population. Similarly, many human rights advocates, myself included, are well aware of the September 1982 massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon by Christian Phalangist allies of Israel, but less familiar with the Palestinian massacre of Christian civilians in the village of Damour in 1976, which in turn was provoked by a Christian Phalangist massacre two days earlier in Karantina. And so on. In some cases, righteous anger stretches back to atrocities from previous generations.

Ignorance of an opponent's narrative exacerbates conflict. Sixty-seven years after the creation of the state of Israel, no Palestinian school in the West Bank or Gaza Strip teaches the history of the Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. Israeli students are not taught about the Palestinian expulsion in 1947 or details of Palestinian life under Israeli occupation.

When we ignore historical context for animosity, we grease the skids for retaliation. With no appreciation for US injustices which inspired the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks, Americans still lack remorse for the hundreds of thousands of Afghans and Iraqis we killed in revenge. After all, those who attacked us were not human beings but "evil doers."

And now the US government tells us that Russian President Putin is the villain in Ukraine. The mainstream media is eager to back up this allegation. The alternative media, on the other hand, reminds us that NATO expansionism provoked the Russian response and that the history of Ukrainian nationalists collaborating with the Nazis legitimately frightens Russian-speaking Ukrainians today.



The US government and Western media have also vilified Syrian President Assad, but Nobel Laureate Mairead Maguire muddies that water. In April 2014, Mairead visited Damascus, Latakia, and Homs where she "saw the damage and spoke to Syrians who were unable to live in their homes and have suffered unspeakable crimes committed by rebels against them." Outside her hotel in Damascus, she heard two large explosions from mortar attacks which left one soldier and three civilians dead. She interviewed Syrian Christians who claimed to have seen the massacre of up to 90 civilians by rebels north of Latakia. Refugees from Haram told her that foreign fighters had crossed the Turkish border, kidnapped over 300 people, and killed another 150. In Latakia she met with Lilly Martin, an American immigrant to Syria, who said that missiles were fired daily into Latakia from Turkish territory, often killing many people on the streets. Ms. Martin believes that the war was not the result of a popular uprising but a foreign campaign for regime change. What the West calls "freedom fighters," she called "terrorists." Mairead met many Syrians who feared that the fall of the Assad regime would spell disaster for religious and ethnic minorities.

The extent to which anti-Assad forces are made up of Al-Qaeda affiliates varies depending on one's perspective, just as the extent of fascist participation in the movement that brought down the former Ukrainian president is in dispute. That both nefarious groups are involved is not in doubt. Those who seek to penetrate the fog of war must take all perspectives into consideration to achieve an accurate assessment from which a path can be charted to lasting peace.

The only result for assigning black and white hats is to give a green light to those perpetually straining at the leash, asking, "Whom shall we kill now?" No matter how pointless generations of war have been, militarists would still have us believe that more killing will end killing.

It's hard to penetrate the fog of war, but vital not to allow snippets of the truth to seduce us into violence. A commitment to nonviolence buys the time necessary to uncover the roots of war. Revulsion for violence is not diminished, nor is the desire for an effective and swift response, but an escalation of bloodshed is prevented. No more corpses will be heaped onto the pile thanks to us. Energy can then be expended to address injustices which instigate violence, especially those injustices we have perpetrated ourselves. Dispelling the fog of war gives peace a chance. Ω

Uprooting a Peaceful Garden

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

On May 19, 2014, seventeen kilometers south of Bethlehem, Israeli soldiers uprooted more than 1,500 fruit trees planted ten years ago by the Palestinian organization Tent of Nations. Soldiers also destroyed terraces and grape vines. Owned by the Nassar family, the farm lies just below Neve Daniel, an Israeli settlement, located in the Gush Etzion bloc. The property has long been targeted by Israeli occupation authorities seeking to confiscate the land and expand the settlement, but under Israeli law only land that is left fallow for three years can be seized. The family was preparing for harvest, with international volunteers set to come in June to help with picking the apricots and apples.

The Nassar family founded Tent of Nations as a land and youth project that seeks to bring people from different cultures and backgrounds together to build bridges of understanding, reconciliation, and peace. It organizes summer camps for children, art and English classes for women, and the development of Palestinian land.

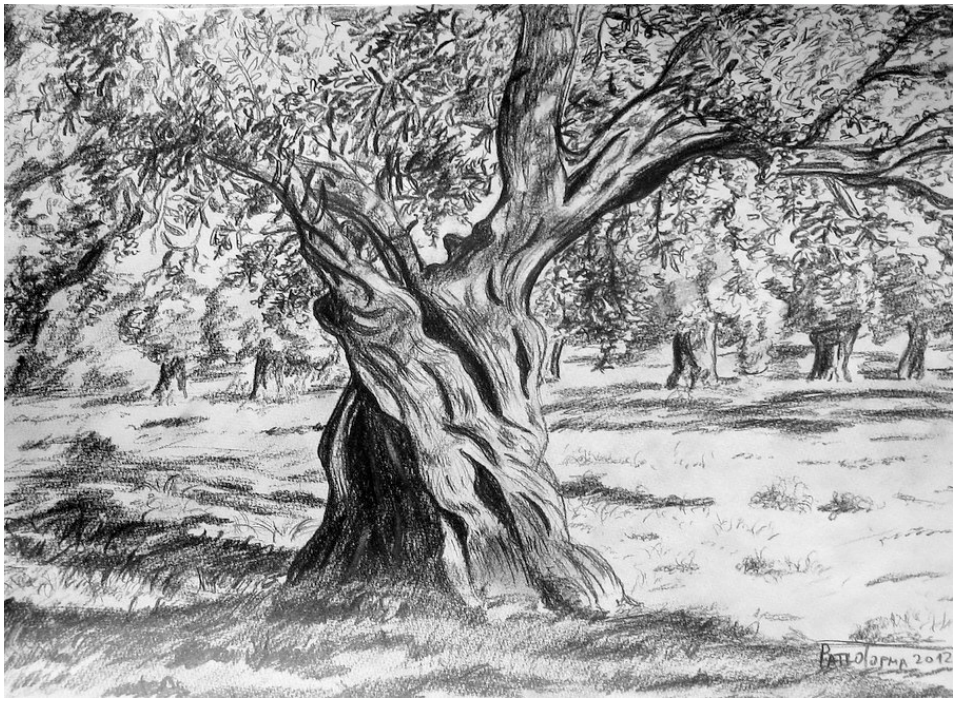
My wife, Claire visited Tent of Nations in December of 2009. She met Daher Nassar, whose grandfather purchased the land in 1916. Daher told Claire, "Everyone is welcome here, even the settlers, as long as they don't bring guns." At the end of Claire's visit, she donated money for the planting of 40 trees, which were probably destroyed on May 19.

Hours after the trees were uprooted, Tarak Kauff, a member of the board of directors for Veterans for Peace, said, "How deplorable again and again, the cruelty, the brutality of the power mongers, the war mongers. Blessed are those who plant trees and who have peace in their hearts."

Since 1967, when Israel occupied the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, Israel has uprooted over 800,000 Palestinian olive trees, demolished over 27,000 Palestinian homes, and built 262 Jewish-only illegal settlements on Palestinian land. West Bank Palestinians suffer 22.5% unemployment and face more than 500 checkpoints and other travel restrictions. Israel takes 80% of the available water from the West Bank and charges Palestinians up to ten times as much for water as it does Israelis. Since the creation of the Israeli state in 1947, Palestinians have suffered ten times as many casualties as Israelis. Despite these injustices, the United States provides $8.5 million in military aid to Israel every day.

Former US President Jimmy Carter condemned the Israeli occupation in his 2006 book, **Peace: Not Apartheid.** In 2012, the African National Congress Chairperson, Baleka Mbete, said the Israeli regime was not only comparable but "far worse than Apartheid South Africa."

Editor's Note: We urge our readers to endorse the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, a nonviolent strategy that calls for Israel to: end its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands occupied in June 1967; dismantle the Wall; recognize the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and respect, protect, and promote the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in United Nations Resolution 194. For more information: http://www.bdsmovement.net/.



Crescent Storm

by Giles Longley-Cook

In fright the olive trees duck low,
their branches writhing to and fro
beneath the bursts of wind that blow
the burning bullet bits of snow.

Above the iron clouds have sped,
leaving their trails of ghostly jets.
The ground beneath is cold and wet
from what they dropped on helpless heads

The rolling breeze now whips and churns
like fire in formless frenzy burns
The trees all strain but cannot run.

Dirt floats like ashes from the urn. Ω

Reckoning

(Continued from Page 1)

accounting of the Troubles, at least as much as an oral history project can. It was a reckoning with the past preserved for the future.

Helen McKendry, May 2014

I got caught up in the Adams story, my reactions ranging from curiosity about a conflict I naively thought was settled (Hadn't they had a peace process over there?) to sympathy for a brave daughter's insistence on a reckoning for the death of a mother shot one night and dumped in a shallow grave that for years no one could find. But what does a full reckoning require? Do the events we endure, or the actions of our opponent determine our ability to face the past, ask forgiveness, and forgive?

The week the Adams story broke I heard Rwandan genocide survivor Immaculée Ilibagiza speak at a local high school about her own reckoning with the brutality in her homeland. A Tutsi, Ilibagiza hid in a tiny bathroom of a Hutu neighbor for 91 days, with seven other women and girls, while all around her Hutu genocidaires slaughtered the Tutsis in her village. Mother, Father, brothers, grandparents. Everyone was killed in a merciless rampage.

Ilibagiza's months closeted in her neighbor's bathroom were like an accelerated purgatory, during which she passed through an incapacitating hate to a place of remarkable compassion and confidence in God. All of reality, as she had known it, had disintegrated around her. Her faith was crushed. She forgot how to believe in God. Her anger and desire for revenge were at first so consuming, she thought she would not survive. Worried she might have a breakdown, she asked her neighbor to play a radio outside the bathroom door for distraction. Then she sank deep into the rosary, first muttering the words for psychic mooring, later embracing them. She asked for a Bible and read with new eyes a text she had heard all her life.

Ilibagiza initially deleted "as we forgive those who trespass against us" every time she prayed the "Our Father" because she could not forgive her killers and did not want to lie to God. But here too she passed through phases moving from bitter resistance – I forgive them God, but send them to Hell — to an understanding of Christ's mercy that left her unable to hate.

Prior to her talk, Ilibagiza showed a short documentary that included a clip of her returning to her village after the genocide. A man, known to have participated in the killing of one her brothers, walks down the path and she embraces him. "It's all right. It's all right," she says, when the American accompanying journalist expresses alarm.

Helen McKendry has yet to have such an encounter with her mother's assailants. For years, the IRA denied having anything to do with McConville's death. Adams finally acknowledged IRA involvement in the 1990's. When the family asked for help recovering her body, the IRA obliged, but all searches yielded nothing until 2003, when a person walking their dog along the beach in the Republic of Ireland stumbled across McConville's bullet-shattered skull poking up from the ground.

Perhaps this very callousness fueled McKendry's pursuit of Adams and the IRA through all these years. We want the killers of our loved ones to fully comprehend what they have done. *Look here, you murderer. This body you dumped on the side of the road was a mother whose life was intricately connected to so many others*.

We also want our assailants to know we know what they have done. I have heard that some of the survivors of the Rwandan genocide visited the imprisoned killers of their families and brought them food. In addition to being acts of mercy, these visits communicated to the perpetrators that the victims knew who they were and where they were. A reckoning of sorts. No living silently side-by-side in denial of the past.

I think Ilibagiza also made prison visits to her family's killers, perhaps with similar intent. But the reckoning she experienced in the tiny bathroom of her Hutu neighbor was not confined to the specifics of the atrocities she endured. During those dark days, she prayed her way deep down into the place where God abides and discovered the solidity of love. The world, she came to realize, was divided into two parts: the side of love and the side of hate. Those standing on love's side were always trying to bring the others over. Ω

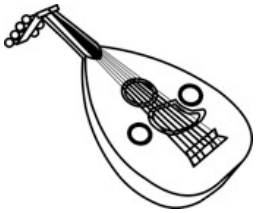
Immaculée Ilibagiza, 2014

Teacher

by Michael True

It's the silence after all the talk
that stuns me. Their bowed heads,
pensive and forever young. Even
that sly one, in the far corner,
beyond reach of any idea or song,
knits his brow above blank pages.
Meandering, dull,
our time together takes on
form and meaning briefly.
Idle, pretending disinterest,
I watch them put the semester
into shape, and love them
with a forgiveness
that is almost human. Ω

Reprinted with permission from the author's 2013 book, ***Plains Songs and Other Poems****.*



A Face

by David Williams

All of you are close and unknown
to me as the bones of my face.

So when I heard the cries for vengeance
contaminating grief,

I wanted to hug the earth
and sink and disappear.

Instead I cradle
this oud I can't play,

its face unvarnished so not to deaden
the subtlest resonance,

it's neck unfretted so it can answer
any ripple between two banks.

Spirit still moves through the body,
Mother of Mercy! Ω

Reprinted with permission from the author's 1993 book, ***Traveling Mercies****.*

Helen West Heller

We Belong to God

by Joseph Campanello

We all belong to God:
Body and soul, and all of our stuff.
Even our minds are only ours on loan.
Our identities come from Whose we are,
Not from the things we think we own.

We are all stewards:
Of the talents God has bestowed,
Responsible for using them with care,
For the Kingdom of God and the common good,
Of course we're expected to share.

We all belong to each other:
As one body united under our Lord,
Unselfishness and generosity should be
Our natural condition, wish, and state,
Not acquisitive greed nor harsh competition,
Nor the self-centered pride that leads to hate.

We all belong to God:
Therefore we are His to dispose of
As He deems necessary, prudent, and right,
Not to follow our own misguided desires,
But to do justice and follow His light. Ω

Case for Utopia

by Peter Maurin (1877-1949)

The world would be better off
if people tried to become better.
And people would become better
if they stopped trying to become better off.
For when everybody tries to become better off,
nobody is better off.
But when everybody tries to become better,
everybody is better off.
Everybody would be rich
if nobody tried to become richer.
And nobody would be poor
if everybody tried to be the poorest.
And everybody would be
what he ought to be
if everybody tried to be
what be wants the other fellow to be.

Christianity has nothing to do
with either modern capitalism
or modern Communism,
for Christianity has
a capitalism of its own
and a communism of its own.
Modern capitalism
is based on property without responsibility,
while Christian capitalism
is based on property with responsibility.

Modern Communism
is based on poverty through force
while Christian communism
is based on poverty through choice.
For a Christian,
voluntary poverty is the ideal
as exemplified by St. Francis of Assisi,
while private property
is not an absolute right, but a gift
which as such can not be wasted,
but must be administered
for the benefit of God's children. Ω

"Our job is to love others
without stopping to inquire whether or not
they are worthy."

Thomas Merton

Freedom of Religion

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

On May 15, in Khartoum, Sudan, Meriam Ibrahim, who is 8-months pregnant, was sentenced to death for "apostasy," after refusing to renounce her Christian faith and convert to Islam. Although her husband, her son, and her mother are Christians, because her father was a Muslim, she is barred by Islamic Law from practicing any other religion. In many countries, Islamic Law prohibits Muslims from converting and all other faiths from proselytizing.

To the extent that religion claims to profess eternal Truth, it is not surprising that the practitioners of various religions might try to establish religious states. To do otherwise, they might argue, would be to allow people to believe and practice false doctrines and thereby lead themselves and society in harmful directions.

The modern rise of Islamic Law in Africa and Asia is also a reaction to the humiliation of Christian colonialism and continued Western economic, political, and military domination. Many Muslims believe that the imposition of Islamic Law is integral to independence. Some believe that a failure to impose it causes them to lose favor with God and suffer more indignities like foreign domination.

The imposition of Islamic Law is the latest attempt to enforce religious participation, but hardly unique. In 1534, King Henry VIII required everyone in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales to take an oath acknowledging him as the head of the Church. Those who refused were legally prohibited from many professions, voting, and the ownership of property. During the time of the Inquisition, the Catholic monarchs of Spain and Portugal killed or exiled Jews and Muslims who refused to convert to Christianity. There are Buddhist nationalists in Burma who want the law to discriminate against Muslims and Hindu nationalists in India who want to criminalize religious conversions to Islam and Christianity. In each instance, those who favor a state religion are inspired by a nationalistic fervor, religious chauvinism, and greed. Discriminatory laws are often passed in hard economic times.

Although they are unlikely to admit it, the proponents of state religions are also motivated by anxiety that their faith would lose adherents in an open society. They also fear that pluralism will challenge social mores and traditional national identity.

No matter their motivation, the proponents of state religions ignore what is essential to religious faith. While external practice can be enforced by harsh penalties, internal belief will always be a matter of the heart. Religious integrity is lost when adherence is compelled by threats.

Sentencing Meriam Ibrahim to death not only threatens her life, but also refutes the idea that Islam is a religion of mercy and compassion. The religious violence of purportedly Christian states during the Inquisition and Crusades similarly poisoned the reputation of Christianity. Thankfully, moderate Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, and Buddhists embrace the separation of religion from the state. Were this not so, atheists would be right to condemn religion as anathema to freedom, justice, and peace. Although the defenders of state religions see tolerant societies as chaotic and permissive, they miss the fact that religious toleration is far superior to repression and violence. Religions, like all belief systems, ultimately rise or fall on the basis of their merits and those alone. Meriam Ibrahim should be set free and allowed to follow whatever faith her heart and head draw her to practice. Ω

Letters

Dear Scott & Claire,
I glanced at the book review on Dorothy Day—very good, Claire, but you have an error with the title—**115 Days of Prayer with Dorothy Day**—should be 15 days. I knew Dorothy Day very little, but my memories of her remain positive. I have no doubt about her saintliness.

...In your Feb./Mar. issue, I liked best what you wrote about "the cut" [female genital mutilation]. Man's inhumanity to women.

Regardless of all the earthside horrors, we remain safely in the Hands of God.

Joan Thomas
Phoenix, Arizona

Editor's Note: While someone might chose to pray with Dorothy Day for three and a half months, Joan is correct that the book's author and our friend, Michael Boover, only called for a half a month. That typo escaped the notice of four proofreaders. Sorry about that, Michael.

Dear Scott,
Thanks for another great issue. May your father find ultimate purpose. My mom passed in January 1997. I am very grateful for the times together.... Last Wednesday, I was heading for the Turnpike when I noticed my wife's car approaching from an on-ramp. She had left work an hour earlier, so I was surprised to see her and very amused. When we saw each other, we both beamed smiles and gleefully rode on side by side on the Pike and 290 before she turned off to her destination, and I continued on. Reflecting on this afterward, it was a metaphor for our lives together — coming together for a "short" spell,

then moving on to our destinations—Appreciate the moment! Love is precious. Time is short.
Love and peace,

Phil Milgrom
Warren, Massachusetts

Dear Scott,
...Please help me understand what it means when publications say they are:
a. bi-monthly?,
b. bi-weekly?
c. quarterly?
d. winter, spring, summer, fall?
Tell me when such publications should arrive, as I get confused.

Cody Neal
Cañon City, Colorado

Editor's Note: According to **Webster's Dictionary***: "bi·monthly" is an adjective which means "occurring every two months"* ***as well as*** *"occurring twice a month." Bi-weekly also has a dual meaning. For clarity, we have inserted "every two months" in the information box on page 2. Regarding publications that come out seasonally, that's anyone's guess. Many CW publications arrive here well past their calendar dates. We have received Christmas issues in February and Easter issues in June. For our part, we try to mail* The Catholic Radical *a week prior to the first days of December, February, April, June, August, and October.*

Dear Scott and Claire,
...I wouldn't want to be without *The Catholic Radical*. It's full of the "bad news," and the good and better news that you and many other people care that bad things are happening to our brothers and sisters.

Yes, it's the assurance that many people persevere in the works of mercy that keeps me from a depressing sadness over what so many suffer unjustly. Just the thought of John Robert Ashley in prison for twenty years for a murder he didn't commit moves us to approach the Divine Mercy. Our prisons here in Honduras hold many, many John Roberts.

I had forgotten (how could I?) how many times the US military has invaded this country until I studied your list. Five times. Even now, young Hondurans risk their lives daily to go live in the USA as slaves. They can't believe that life up there could be nearly so bad and hard as it is here. They couldn't care less that the US invaded their "beloved" country, and still does.

Even if one doesn't read the book by Michael Boover (I hope we all will), Claire's review reminds us how important and necessary prayer is. Just the little phrase "the transformative power of prayer" helped me to resolve to take it more seriously. I keep Dorothy Day's photo on the shelf to keep her example in mind.

After reading Robert's "Mason Street Musings" on feeling the need for gratitude, I want to share my sudden recollection of the day. I was wondering if any of the hundreds of penitents who come to the cathedral every week really appreciate the hours we spend ministering to them in that way. (The hard chair and debilitating heat can easily make me feel sorry for myself!) Well, while I was determined not to let ingratitude for the sacrament slow me down, a woman came over to me with an envelope full of *lempiras* and on the envelope was written, "Thank you for hearing my confession." That was enough gratitude to keep me going without complaints for a long time.

I look forward to hearing how you did in the Boston Marathon. I ran it several times. Maybe some day I'll be able to "walk" the route from Hopkinton to Boston. Running it will be out of the question.

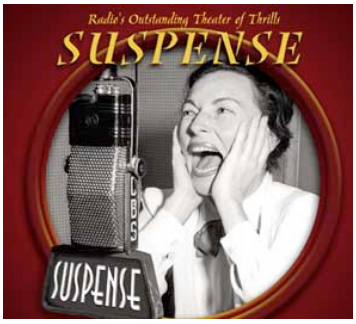
As I celebrated Divine Mercy Sunday, April 27th, the word I now use most often in my thoughts and prayers, I found myself repeating "mercy" over and over as I read "The Folly of Domination," where Scott evokes the nightmares of conflicts and rebellions and a spiral of death in every corner of the world.

Mercy on you, your guests, readers, benefactors, family (and enemies!).

Father John Wallace
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Editor's Note: As you can see from this photo of Scott and Claire with their friends, Jane Rabbis and Yael London, this year's Boston Marathon was very good news — a joyful event with an incredible outpouring of support from an enthusastic crowd. Many spectators applauded Scott's and Claire's peace shirts with the quote from Dorothy Day on the back: "Love is the solution."

Catholic Worker Calendar



Wednesday, June 11 — Tales of Suspense: Please come listen to episodes of the fantastic radio program from the 1940's. We'll set up comfy chairs, serve refreshing drinks, and turn down the lights. 7:30 P.M. 52 Mason Street.

Wednesday June 25 — "Papers": Please come join us in seeing Anne Galisky's film about undocumented youth and the challenges they face. 7 P.M. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow.

Wednesday, June 18 & July 16 — Evening Prayer or Mass: Please join us in prayer and song. 7 P.M. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow.

Mason Street Musings

When we first moved here 28 years ago, a blue house stood immediately behind ours on a tiny lot. It was one of six on Mason Court which were originally built for freed slaves in the post Civil War period. A half year after we arrived, the blue house caught fire and stood as a wreck until the City demolished it. With the permission of its owner, we transformed the space into a community garden and play space for neighborhood children, who dubbed it "No Fighting Park." The lot now has a small fruit tree, lush green grass, rose and lilac bushes, as well as a vegetable garden.

Some of the children who have played there had tough family situations. Years ago, a very young boy, who was upset that one of our volunteers had to leave, threatened, "Read me another picture book *now*, or I'll cut your head off!"

More recently, a small boy asked me what I had done that morning, and I said, "I ran 15 miles." He then asked, "Backwards or forwards?" He followed up: "Do you have children?" When I told him I had four, he looked up at our house and asked, "Do they go on the roof?" I replied, "They might sometime." But then he asked, "Do you slap them?" My heart sank.

We live in a world that is often very cruel to children. I think of the hundreds of school girls who were abducted in Nigeria and those trapped in the ruins of Syrian cities, as well as those being emotionally and physically abused here in the United States. Why can't they enjoy a love like that which is lavished on my granddaughter by her parents, aunts, uncles, Claire, and me. I sing to little May about Winnie the Pooh and the Itsy Bitsy Spider, while children elsewhere scavenge for food, shelter, and a speck of kindness. This is completely unacceptable.

"Peace" by E. Feyerabend

We welcome any of you to consider volunteering with us this summer to offer some kindness to the children of our neighborhood through gardening, story telling, or game playing. We also invite you to help us redouble our efforts to banish the scourge of war whose violence plagues children.

On May 18, our daughter Grace received a master's degree from Clark University in community development. She works with young people at the Regional Environmental Council's Youth Grow gardens and farmer's market. On May 29, our son Patrick graduated from Harvard and is likely to teach this fall at a very needy school. Our eldest son, Justin, continues work on science and technology schools for girls in Egypt, while Aiden, our youngest, volunteered, during Holy Cross' spring break, on a reservation. Claire and I like to think that gentle parenting helped nurtured our children into adults who are kind to children themselves.

So many of the homeless people who appeal to us for aid never enjoyed the innocent childhoods they deserved. God willing, our hospitality is a small recompense for the deficit in their lives. After several months of plenty, we are once again facing scarce funds to keep our efforts going. As always, your help is a godsend. With Robert's departure, we will also be looking for another live-in community member as well as more volunteers, especially at our bakery.

Years ago, a wide-eyed three-year-old, who saw me planting flowers, asked, "Are you a fairy?" May all of us be magical friends to every child we meet. Ω **Scott**

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